

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 ACDA-19 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

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R 010545Z JUN 74

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 664

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SINGAPORE 2395

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MARR, SN

SUBJECT: ADM GAYLER'S CALL ON DEFENSE MINISTER GOH

SUMMARY: IN CONVERSATION MAY 31 WITH ADMIRAL GAYLER, DEFENCE MINISTER GOH WAS HIGHLY CRITICAL OF MALAYSIA'S HASTE IN MOVING TO RECOGNIZE THE PRC, SAID INDONESIA WOULD PERMIT SINGAPORE'S AIR FORCE TO USE THE AIR SPACE OVER SUMATRA FOR TRAINING, THOUGHT BRITAIN WOULD PULL OUT ITS GROUND FORCES BY END OF YEAR, BUT LEAVE ITS AIR UNITS INCLUDING THE TWO NIMRODS, AND EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR OUR POLICY VIS-A-VIS THE INDIAN OCEAN AND FOR MAINTENANCE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM OF TRANSIT OF STRAITS. END SUMMARY.

1. ADM GAYLER CALLED ON DEFENCE MINISTER GOH MAY 31. POLAD ABRAMOWITZ AND I ACCOMPANIED ADM GAYLER; DEFENSE PERM
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SECY PANG TEE POW ALSO PRESENT. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS OF

HOURLONG CONVERSATION.

2. DR. GOH WAS VERY CRITICAL OF MALAYSIA'S MOVE TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE PRC. HE SAID GOM HAD BEEN PREMATURE IN DOING SO AND HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THEY FELT COMPELLED TO MOVE SO QUICKLY. "THEY ARE ASKING FOR TROUBLE", HE SAID. SINGAPORE "WOULD BE THE LAST OR NEXT TO LAST" OF ASEAN COUNTRIES TO RECOGNIZE THE PRC AND WOULD PUT IT OFF AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT INTERNAL PRESSURES WOULD MOUNT IN SINGAPORE TO RECOGNIZE AS OTHER COUNTRIES IN AREA FOLLOWED MALAYSIA'S LEAD AND THAT THEY WOULD EVENTUALLY HAVE TO FOLLOW SUIT. HE SAID THAT CHINESE OF SINGAPORE WERE AWARE OF CONDITIONS IN CHINA, WERE PRETTY WELL SATISFIED WITH THEIR LOT IN SINGAPORE, AND WOULD NOT BE TAKEN IN BY CHINESE PROPAGANDA.

3. HE SAID GOS WAS GETTING ALONG VERY WELL WITH INDONESIA. GOI HAD AGREED GIVE SINGAPORE AIR FORCE RIGHT TO USE AIR SPACE OVER SUMATRA FOR TRAINING. AGREEMENT FORMALIZING THIS ARRANGEMENT HAD NOT YET BEEN SIGNED.

4. IN ANSWER TO QUERY ABOUT FUTURE OF BRITISH FORCES IN SINGAPORE, GOH SAID HE WAS CERTAIN THEY WOULD PULL OUT AROUND END OF YEAR. MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE RODGERS HAD SAID DURING RECENT VISIT THAT FAIRLY DRASTIC CUTS IN DEFENCE COSTS WERE REQUIRED AND LEFT CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT FORCES IN SINGAPORE WOULD NOT BE SPARED. GOH INFERRED FROM THIS THAT ALL BRITISH GROUND FORCES WOULD BE PULLED OUT, THE NAVY WOULD SEND SHIPS IN FOR TEMPORARY PERIODS, BUT WOULD MAINTAIN NO PERMANENT PRESENCE, AND THE AIR FORCE WOULD PROBABLY REMAIN AS IS. RODGERS HAD ASKED SPECIFICALLY IF GOS OBJECTED TO THE STATIONING OF TWO NIMRODS IN SINGAPORE AND GOH'S ANSWER HAD BEEN NO. HE THOUGHT THIS MEANT THAT HMG WOULD LEAVE NIMRODS IN PLACE. ADM GAYLER SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT THE NIMRODS REMAIN. GOH AGREED.

5. ADM GAYLER REVIEWED BRIEFLY OUR INTENTIONS RE PUTTING FLEET UNITS INTO THE INDIAN OCEAN FROM TIME TO TIME AND SAID WE HAD NO INTENTION OF LEAVING INDIAN OCEAN TO THE RUSSIANS. DR. GOH INDICATED HIS AGREEMENT, SAYING IT WAS IMPORTANT
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THAT WE COUNTER THE RUSSIAN PRESENCE THERE.

6. GOH REITERATED THE GOS POSITION IN FAVOR OF FREEDOM OF PASSAGE IN STRAITS. WHEN ASKED IF HE THOUGHT INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA MIGHT COME AROUND TO ACCEPT THAT POSITION, HE SAID HE THOUGHT IT UNLIKELY. SINGAPORE HAS NO INFLUENCE WITH EITHER COUNTRY ON THIS MATTER, HE SAID. ADM GAYLER EXPRESSED THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO MAINTAINING THE FREEDOM-OF-

PASSAGE PRINCIPLE AT THE LOS CONFERENCE. DR. GOMY AGREED.

7. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE HEARD OF
INDONESIA'S WILLINGNESS TO ALLOW SINGAPORE TO USE INDONESIAN
AIR SPACE FOR TRAINING. IF THIS ACTUALLY MATERIALIZES IT
WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD FOR REGIONAL MILITARY
COOPERATION. THIS IS ALSO THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE HEARD A
SENIOR OFFICIAL SAY THEY EXPECT THE BRITISH TO PULL
OUT ALL GROUND FORCES THIS YEAR, ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN FAIRLY
CLEAR SINCE THE RODGERS VISIT THAT SOME FAIRLY DRASTIC CUT
WAS TO BE EXPECTED.
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